

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Sandra Melstad, Physical Activity Coord., Nutrition/Physical Activity Program, SD Dept. of Health, (605) 367-7491

Turn off the TV, Participate in Life, April 21-27

(PIERRE, SD 04/02/08)— During the course of a year American children spend more time watching TV – 900 hours – than they do at school. In fact, according to “The Center for SCREEN-TIME Awareness” the average American watches 4 hours and 35 minutes of television each day.

As part of National Turn off the TV week, April 21-27, the South Dakota Department of Health’s Nutrition and Physical Activity Program is conducting a statewide radio station contest to urge South Dakotans to turn off their television sets for one week and participate in activities that promote healthy lifestyles. The radio station that comes up with the best promotion will win \$500. The cash prize is being sponsored by the South Dakota Public Health Association.

“Turning off the TV for seven full days helps people realize that life without television is not painful,” says Sandra Melstad, Physical Activity Coordinator for the Nutrition and Physical Activity program. “In fact, they might find that life is actually more fun with less TV.”

Melstad says a multi-day TV “fast” allows time for people to be more productive and learn to form new healthy habits.

“This is a great chance to try a new activity like hiking, yoga, or swimming, take a bike ride, or play together as a family,” Melstad says.

Studies have shown that an increase in sedentary behavior – such as watching TV - contributes to an increase in obesity and risk for developing chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, type 2-diabetes, and hypertension. TV viewing also increases aggressive behavior and children who are heavy TV watchers have shown to perform poorly in school.

Current recommendations are that children under two years of age should watch no TV, children over two years of age should watch two hours or less of TV per day, and adults should watch no more than 10 hours of TV per week.

For more information on National Turn off the TV Week visit www.healthysd.gov.

###



615 E. 4th St.
TEL: 605-773-3737



Pierre, SD 57501
FAX: 605-773-5942

The Nutrition and Physical Activity Plan is the first comprehensive plan to increase healthy eating and physical activity as ways to reduce overweight and obesity levels, and their subsequent risk for chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and diabetes. It was released in early 2006.

Other programs have been developed as part of the Nutrition and Physical Activity Plan, including a worksite wellness program; “Fit from the Start Initiative,” giving caregivers information on helping children get a healthy start to their lives; “Great Day of Play,” which works in conjunction with state and local parks departments to promote physical activity; and “Healthy Hunter,” which encourages hunters to get fit before the start of hunting season by offering them a six-week nutrition and fitness program.

The South Dakota Public Health Association: The mission of the South Dakota Public Health Association is to promote the health of South Dakota’s individuals, families and communities. The goals of the Association are:

1. To stimulate and influence educational opportunities for public health and health-related occupations at all levels.
2. To increase community awareness of public health concerns.
3. To initiate and/or support needed action on specific health concerns.
4. To stimulate improvement of organization, financing, coordination and delivery of health services to individuals, families and the community.



National Turn off the TV Week April 21-27

Use the following trivia to encourage listeners to call in to win a prize.

- Americans watch 231 billion hours of television each year
- By age 18 the American child has spent more time watching television than any other single activity
- Adults spend approximately two months a year watching television
- Experts recommend that children shouldn't be exposed to television until the age of 2
- Children over the age of two should be limited to no more than two hours of television a day
- Adults should limit their television time to 10 hours or less per week
- On average, children watch 4 hours of television a day
- On average, adults watch 29-34 hours of television a week
- 98% of Americans have at least one TV in their home
- Two out of three Americans watch TV while eating dinner
- In the course of a year, children spend more time watching TV (900 hours) than in school

